

# MAYOR'S CORNER

A BLOG BY MAYOR JAMES D. STEWART, JR.

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## THE ANTIDOTE FOR LOSING IS SERVING

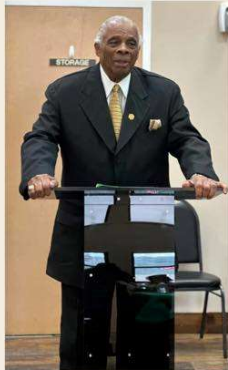
To everyone who gave their heart to the August 26th election and came up short: I know your pain.

**Eight votes.** That's how close I came to winning my first city council race in 2004.

**Twenty-one votes.** That's the margin that cost me the mayor's office in 2012.

I know the sting you're feeling. I know what it's like to replay every conversation, every missed opportunity, to question if the voters you didn't reach will haunt you forever.

But here's what I learned: **losing an election doesn't disqualify you from serving your city.**



### WHEN DEFEAT BECAME MY TEACHER

The week after Dr. Simpson Berry beat me by those eight votes, I swallowed my pride, walked to his porch, and asked: "How can I serve you for the next four years?"

Two years and six months later, when Dr. Berry moved, I completed his term.

After losing the mayor's race by 21 votes, former mayor Tommy Joe Alexander and I met at Jack's. Instead of nursing wounds, I listened as he offered me the city clerk position.

For four years, I served as his right hand. **Both losses taught me that sometimes you have to become a great number two before you become an incredible number one.** Like Joseph serving before leading Egypt, preparation happens in unexpected places.

### YOUR CHOICE DEFINES YOU

You ran because your ideas mattered. **That belief doesn't disappear because of a vote count.**

After every loss, you choose: ride off into the sunset or roll up your sleeves and serve.

I served on the Commercial Development Authority, and continued to do so after my first loss, for a total of seven years. No spotlight. Just service. **Those years taught me more about leadership than any campaign speech.**

### YOUR CITY STILL NEEDS YOU

The problems you ran a campaign on to solve **didn't** disappear on election night.

**You have skills.** Use them on the Downtown Redevelopment Board, Planning and Zoning, or the Irondale Tree Commission.

**You have passion.** Channel it through our Citizens Engagement Institute, which helps citizens find places to serve.

**You have experience.** Please share it with those who won.



### THE REAL VICTORY

**Serving your city makes you a winner, regardless of what any ballot says.**

You may not want to work with the current leadership. That's okay. Find your own niche.

**Don't let one election night define your contribution.**

Your city needs people who care enough to run. But even more, **it needs people who care enough to serve regardless of outcomes.**

**YOUR CITY CHOSE SOMEONE ELSE TO LEAD, BUT IT STILL NEEDS YOU TO SERVE. WILL YOU ANSWER THAT CALL?**